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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MONTERREY 000190

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [MX](#)
SUBJECT: DRUG CARTELS INFILTRATE THE QUIET STATE OF ZACATECAS

REF: A) 2008 MONTERREY 414; B) 2008 MONTERREY 089

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CLASSIFIED BY: Bruce Williamson, Consul General, Monterrey, State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary. Although the state of Zacatecas appears relatively free from narcotics violence, two recent events demonstrate the extent to which the drug cartels have infiltrated the state government. On May 16 a convey of armed men freed 53 prisoners from a state prison in five minutes, without any resistance by prison authorities. Many of the escapees were low level members of the Gulf/Zeta drug cartel. The next day it was reported that the Monreal family, the most important political clan in Zacatecas, was being investigated for having 14.5 tons of marijuana in a family owned warehouse. Ricardo Monreal is a popular former Governor and current federal Senator, and his brother David is the mayor of the second largest city of Fresnillo. David lamely claimed that the 14 tons of marijuana had been planted in his warehouse for political purposes. Although in the past post has reported the influence of the drug cartels within the state of Zacatecas, these events prove even deeper penetration of the drug cartels into the state government itself. End Summary.

Daring Prison Break and Marijuana Warehouse

12. (U) A convey of 30 men in a convoy of vehicles approached the prison in the early morning hours of May 16, backed up by a helicopter. They were able to free 53 convicted felons, including two amcits, in five minutes, without any resistance from the prison guards or officials. Many of the escapees appear to be lower level Gulf/Zeta operatives. Military and state police forces set up checkpoints, but they have not been able to capture any of the escapees. Zacatecas Governor Amalia Garcia has asked for the resignation of the prison director, and the Federal Attorney General's office (PGR) has taken 51 prison officials into custody under suspicion that they were involved in the escape plan.

13. (U) On May 17 there were news reports that in January the Mexican military raided a warehouse owned by David and Candido Monreal and found 14.5 tons of marijuana, as well as drug seeds, and molds to pack the drugs. The raid was based on an anonymous tip. The military also arrested two people at the warehouse, who were subsequently freed during the prison break on May 16. The warehouse had been owned by the Monreal family for years, and it is used to process chile plants. The family claims that the warehouse was empty during the winter months. The federal Attorney General's office (PGR) is reportedly investigating the family's ties to the Zeta drug cartel and narcotic trafficking.

¶4. (SBU) The marijuana bust at the Monreal warehouse is politically explosive because the Monreal clan is the most powerful political group in Zacatecas. Ricardo Monreal was the PRD Governor of Zacatecas from 1998 to 2004 and is currently a federal senator. Ricardo and current PRD Governor Garcia have feuded, and Ricardo supported his brother David's successful run for mayor of Fresnillo representing the PT party. Garcia retaliated by moving to expel Ricardo from the PRD party, but ultimately the matter was dropped. However, in the last few days Ricardo has dropped the PRD to become a Senator for the leftist PT (Partido de Trabajo or Workers Party). Zacatecas will hold its next election for Governor in 2010, and David Monreal alleges that the 14.5 tons of marijuana were planted in the family warehouse as part of a political campaign to discredit the PT party.

¶5. (C) Although Zacatecas appears calm on the surface, post has previously reported that the drug cartels are active in the state. Zacatecas has suffered few drug executions and it is a popular colonial vacation spot. However, in August 2008 Post met with the mayor of Juchipila, Zacatecas, who reported that Zetas controlled his area as part of a drug transit route and several members of his police force had quit in fear. The mayor said that he had requested help from the Zacatecas Secretary of Government Carlos Pinto Nunez, but had not received any assistance (see reftel A). He further charged that the state police were infiltrated by the cartels. In contrast, in an earlier meeting with conoffs Pinto had lauded the cooperation between the federal, state and municipal police in Zacatecas on narcotics issues. Several press sources disagreed, stating that the security situation was rapidly declining and they had received threats against their newspapers (reftel B).

¶6. (C) Comment. These incidents demonstrate that even in a quiet state the drug cartels' tentacles can reach far inside state government and political institutions. The apparent involvement of the Monreal family in drug trafficking is particularly disturbing, since they are the most popular political force in the state. Post will continue to monitor the nebulous links between the drug cartels and political figures in

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our consular district. End Comment.
WILLIAMSONB